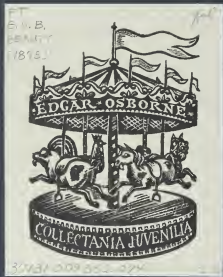




BEAVTY^{AND}THE BEAST





For dearest Anne
with Roy's best love
Charles W. F.



ONE COLD MARCH DAY, THE LITTLE MAID
RAN DOWN TO THE OUTER COURT, WITH HER NEW
SCARLET CLOAK, TO WRAP HER FRIEND THE OLD
WATCH DOG IN !

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST.

An Old Tale New-Told, with Pictures,

By E. V. B.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

- 1.—*Once, on a cold March day, the little maid ran down to the outer court with her new scarlet cloak, to wrap her friend the old watch-dog in!*
- 2.—*In the King's garden the feast is ready and the minstrels wait.*
- 3.—*The merchant found a little door in the wall, and he opened it and went into the Beast's garden.*
- 4.—*Upon the strange prickly leaves some one had curiously carved Beauty's name.*
- 5.—*At dawn, a lady came to comfort her.*
- 6.—*After supper every night, the Beast asked Beauty to be his wife: and every night she said him nay.*
- 7.—*One sister's husband, like Narcissus of old, worshipped his own beauty: but the other was full of learning.*
- 8.—*Only the raven in the brake saw the sisters' rage, and heard them plot his death.*
- 9.—*"Ah, dear Beast!" she said; "alas, that my unkindness should thus slay thee!"*
- 10.—*Love is the magic that makes all things fair.*



BEAUTY AND THE BEAST.

ONCE, long ago, in a certain city whose name is forgotten, there lived a merchant-master. He had three sons and three daughters, but his wife was dead. The man was happy in his children; for the sons were well-grown and brave, and the daughters beautiful. Men called both elder maidens passing fair. One, like dusky

night, black-haired and brown-eyed—the other, bright as the morning, with long tresses of red gold. But the third daughter, born years later, outshone both in her perfect loveliness. Such a lovely maid was never seen—so they named her simply, Beauty. No fairy godmother came with gifts to call her so; but she grew so sweet and lovely, that in the city where she dwelt they knew her by no other name. Howbeit, many a one said, it was but her happy, innocent soul that gave the sunshine to her face. Sometimes it would happen, that one of the great masters in painting or sculpture of those old times, journeying through that place, and beholding her pass down the street, would beseech her to stay a while, that with pencil or with chisel, he might do some image of that gracious, lovesome mien, to make him glad in after days. And thus, it may be, Beauty lives still under the dimness of some old canvas—the St. Catherine or the Virgin Mother of some Holy Family—or smiles may-be, in the carven face of an angel, in the niche beside some

old cathedral door. Even from the time when she was a little child, Beauty possessed the gift of a loving heart. And the love she so freely gave, was paid back to her again in full measure. They who were despised and ugly, in their wretchedness wanted never a kind word or look from her, nor were unholpen by her in their need. Most tenderly she loved all God's suffering creatures, whether of bird or beast; she took them to her heart, and made joy to soothe and comfort them. And she withheld not her small hand from succouring the most ill-favoured of earth's children. Self-forgetful, in her large charity, she tended even herbs, and such unlovely, blossomless, and scentless plants, as might call for her tender care. And the child would oftentimes fetch water for some poor neglected weed, fainting in the hot sun, or stay to prop some weak climbing plant torn down by the rough wind. And Beauty was greatly beloved; and notwithstanding that she never knew a mother's love, her child days went lightly by, and the rose-light of her own sweet joyous

spirit shone back to her from all things round. But as the maiden grew from infancy into youth, her meek heart was pained by her sisters' pride and arrogance. Many were the sharp cruel words she heard; many a hard rebuke must she endure from that ungentle pair. Their pride and hardness knew no end. Vain were they of their many lovers, of their gold-embroidered gowns, of their goodly persons; for well they wist that of all fair women thereabout,—but for their young sister,—they were held peerless. So they envied Beauty the lovely face that God gave her, and the love her kindness won for her. Noble youths sought many a time to gain in marriage one or another of them; but none seemed great enough, or rich enough. Yet they would not let them go, but with half smiles and double words, kept the young men following in their train.

Time sped quickly in the rich city where the merchant dwelt. Day and night the hours danced on to the sound of music and feasting. Beauty's sisters reigned

"IN THE KING'S GARDEN THE FEAST IS READY,
AND THE MINSTRELS WAIT."



like queens amid their young companions,—damsels nigh as fair as they,—but of whom they made not much account, for the splendour of the merchant's daughters cast a cold shadow all around.

On great feast days, when the house was set in order, and the sisters in their rich apparel, and gold crowns upon their heads, sat under silken canopies, with all their lovers at their feet, right glad were they when Beauty sat not with them. At such times the girl, in the glory of her lustrous loveliness, would call the children, to come forth into the fields and woods, and gather flowers with her; or perchance she might steal away to succour in their distress, poor miserable ones, who lay sick and forlorn of hope, in rude dwellings beyond the city walls. Then were the sisters left to reign alone; and no prayer did they ever make to Beauty, for her to share the joyance of such festal days.

But that sweet maiden gave no heed at all to such unkindness. She would seek flowers of rare bloom, and

therewith weave garlands and set them in her sisters' hair,
all unaware that meanwhile sharp stings of envious hatred
stung them, when they marked how men's faces lit up



with gladness whenever Beauty passed by, clad only in
her simple gown. And so neglect and unkindness did
not touch her gentle life. And home was beyond all

things dear to her, for the great love and reverence she bore her father. Dearer moreover than aught else beside, save only his gold (which was indeed no hoarded wealth), was the youngest born to him. Yet the prince-merchant took most delight withal, in his many-oared galleys and full-sailed ships, which ever and anon went out across the harbour bar, and in due course came back into port gold-laden, and heavy with precious merchandise from lands beyond the sunrise. *

But Fortune is not always kind, and there be many winds both fair and foul; and black days there be, when the Fates send forth a wind, which blows no good to any living soul. So fared it with the merchant. For on a day, watchers upon the high watch-tower, out-worn with long waiting, and with gazing seawards in vain, heard the clatter of iron shoes upon the beaten way below. And anon came messengers on swift coursers from some outland place, who did their message, and cried out to the men to cease their watch, for that the ships would return no more.

They told how fierce storms had arisen, and had so buffeted the ships that they drove right upon the rocks ;



the heavy cargo sank down, and all had perished in the sea. Thus sorrow and a great heaviness fell upon the

merchant and all his house. The elder daughters slept not, nor ate, for two days and two nights. No more dreams of pride for them. No more days of idle joy. Fortune hid her face, and the world hid hers, for it had come to pass that the rich man, was on a sudden, poor. The suitors melted away, every one, like ghosts at cock-crow. And not one had said, "Stay with us; my home is thine." Beauty, it is true, might abide in that city, a well-loved, honoured wife; but ruin and unhappiness had crept up to the door, and, like a deadly snake, enfolded all her father's house; and she cared not to live at ease, when they who were dear to her, might scarce have bread to eat. Her brothers knit their brows, and spake no word good or bad; only, they laid by in the great painted chest, their swords, and gay clothing of furred mantles and plumed caps, and went to toil in the fields.

Leagues away, on a barren sandy ridge above the sea, in long-past years, the sea-kings had built them a stronghold. Little of it now had fire and war and

time's long decay left whole, save one tempest-shaken tower. And under the tower a village, where dwelt rude fisher folk. A poor place withal for he who was once a rich lord! A possession that no man might take much pride in. But thither the ruined merchant now must wend, to make his abode there, and strive to win some daily bread, in rough toil with the fishing-boats. So the man with his children departed, and came to dwell in the tower on the grey hill, amidst of wretched huts. And what scanty gear they had, was carried on the backs of one or two hired mules. It was a dark and windy night, the night when they came there, in the season of the year that leaves first turn from green to gold, and barley sheaves stand in the fields, and the vintage is done. The sun had arisen in the morning when Beauty opened the old brown door and looked out from under its low-browed arch. Far down, beyond the curving yellow sands, lay a great sea-plain, silver bright, glittering in changeful lights and colour. Up to the roots of the far-off

white mountains, olive woods clothed all the land with mists of shimmering grey. Corn-fields lay anear, between long stretches of purple-shadowed forest. And the girl



laughed for gladness of heart, calling aloud to her sisters to come and behold with her this glorious new wonder-land where Fate had led them. But they, so soon as they

came and stood beside the open door, did but cast one glance down upon those poverty-stricken huts, below the steep hard by,—then muttering one to the other, “Better in our graves than here!” they turned away their faces



from God's earth and sea: and therewith, through sore repining and complaint, they both fell sick: and on their hard beds made what cheer they might with empty dreams, and lamentation for the goodly days that had been.

In the old homestead on the hill, the year wore on merrily, for Beauty made great sunshine in that place. Her light step and the music of her happy voice seemed everywhere—all about the house, in the low dark rooms and up and down the creaking stair. A glory seemed to shine round her lovely face when you saw it at the door.



Like the wild birds, she was for ever flitting here and there, and singing as she went. She lent the young strength of her white arms to the ancient crone who kept the house. She came wherever she was called. It was Beauty who drew the water and kneaded the cakes, and

led the cows to pasture in the dewy grass-lands in the morning. It was Beauty who set the table, and made ready for father and hungry brothers against their return at evening, from the long day's work. Right glad and willing was she, to labour from red dawn to dark, for the love she bore them. And whatever work she set her hand to, wheresoever she did any service, all things she touched seemed nobler, since that she had to do with them. But greater joy she had otherwhile, on the days when she was sent to keep goats upon the hill. Strong and light of foot herself as a young kid, she climbed the rugged paths among the rocks, following after her wayward herd. Many a day would she wander with them through the great woods till the sun was low. But ever as she went, on the hills under the blue sky, or through the forest amid the green darkness of noonday, sea and sky, and sun and shadow, taught the maiden marvellous things. Many a secret did the wind whisper; many a strange tale her eyes read in the flowery grass;

many a song, for her alone, sang the mountain stream, hurrying over the stones. And when Beauty led home her flock at sun-down, after such sweet days as these



they noted how, when she crossed the threshold and came into the dark house-room, her eyes would shine with a diviner light, than the full health of youth only might give.

Days and months went by; till in the second winter, one morning a weary horseman drew rein at the door. He told that the merchant's heaviest-laden ship, one of those long since given up for lost, had on a sudden sailed into a distant sea-port, and now lay safely anchored in the bay. Loud were the rejoicings that day within the grey old tower on the hill. Joy and laughter filled all hearts. The elder sisters straightway lost themselves in happy day-dreams of a golden coming time; of a joyous life to be lived once more, when they should return to the great rich city. They hastened their father's quick departure for the ship; but as needs must, their farewells were long, for they prayed him to bring back to them many a rich thing that their hearts desired—jewelled coifs, and silken gowns and gold-embroidered stuffs; stores of perfumed gloves and precious stones; and golden chains, and strings of pearls. Each sister longed after something better, and of higher price than the other. So the merchant promised all, and made ready to be gone.

Then Beauty put up her sweet face to bid farewell, as she stood beside the horse, and held his stirrup for the beloved father. And he stooped down to kiss her, saying, "And wilt thou nought, thou best-loved child? Choose only what thing is most rare and longed for, it is granted."



But Beauty whispered, "Bring me a white rose, my father,—a little white rose!"

And seeing that no words could move her in this, but that she would have a rose, a white rose, he promised that and rode away.

So in this changing world the evil days for them

seemed passed away for evermore. It was now winter, and when that tide drew near that the merchant should come home, Beauty's sisters sat all day in the little turret window watching; or they went pacing up and down the bare grey ridge, waiting to behold from afar the long train of laden mules. From early morning, through the glaring noon-tide, oftentimes till after moonrise, when long shadows lengthened, still would they keep untiring watch. Small care indeed had they to see again their father's face; but their souls yearned for the gold and the silver and the treasure he should bring with him.

Alas! the longed-for hour, when at last it came, was in no wise like the picture that eager greed, had held up before their minds' eye. Bad luck still clave fast to the ill-starred merchant; or so it seemed; for when he came anear the wished-for harbour, he saw indeed amidst crowded masts a little smouldering smoke and flame, and folks running to and fro upon the quay; but his own good ship with her bales of costly merchandize, he never

saw. That very night, by misadventure, some spark from the shipmen's fire had fallen unheeded, and the ship had burned down to the edge of the cold water. Thus sore smitten, and in great heaviness, the merchant must wend home again. Poor had he left it, and poor must he return. Full well might cruel fancy now paint for him—as wearily, with down-bent head, he turned to fare back the way that he had come—the grief of such an empty home-coming. “Alas!” he sighed, as he looked round across the wide wintry plain, “unhappy that I am! I cannot even take home with me the one little white rose for Beauty.” And so, very sorrowfully, did he ride on for many a weary mile, in the rain and the wind. Lost in troubled thought, he forgot to mark which way his horse might go. On a sudden the creaking sound of thick branches overhead, with storms of dry dead leaves whirled past his face, and many a wild sound, as of the great north wind in winter battling with the strong-limbed forest-trees, aroused him and

recalled him to himself. All around seemed strange, and unlike the road he knew. Painfully for a time the merchant and his tired beast made head against the driving blast. The forest path seemed as though it would never end; the wind blew as though it would never cease. But at sundown there fell a calm. The dark clouds broke, and in the clear evening light, the man turned into a way he deemed that he had gone, once in older times, under shelter of a grey stone wall. On the right hand, between straight red bolls of tall fir-trees, shone the far-off open country. The wall closed in upon the left; and above the mouldering weed-grown coping, from within, rose dark cypress spires against the sky. Arbutus trees, all a-flame with rich ripe fruit amidst gold-green leaves, tossed down their scarlet balls upon the wet stony way below. And withal, from the other side came a great sweetness as of summer roses upon the air; but a few paces farther on, white roses, like floods of surging foam, overtopped the high wall. Between the whiteness

THE MERCHANT FOUND A LITTLE DOOR IN
THE WALL, AND HE OPENED IT, AND WENT INTO
THE BEAST'S GARDEN.



of uncounted roses scarce any green at all might show. Now as the merchant beheld these foam-white flowers, he thought on Beauty's simple wish. Then he cast about in his mind how to reach up to them; and anon he spied a quaintly-painted gateway in the wall, and a little door set therein. Without more ado he dismounted, and pushing open the little door, passed through into a fairy garden. Within the greenness of that enchanted space there was not any more winter. Green paths overhung by pale-blossomed acacias, led to grassy lawns closed in by well-clipt hedges of box and rosemary, and brodered all over with little flowers,—blue, pink, and lilac,—mixt with the short thick grass. Long narrow terraces rising in green steps one above the other, set with fruit-trees in full bloom, made lines of lovely colour. Wild violets crept fragrantly about their roots, or hung in purple draperies from step to step. Under the shadowy dark-stemmed trees blood-red lilies burnt with a sultry glow. Here and there, in the blackness of some deeper gloom, pure star-like flowers,

poised on tall slender stalks, gleamed white and ghostly. But everywhere about that garden, roses grew and bloomed, scattering their delicate petals upon the grass. Through the silence came a low murmuring of unseen waters; the thrush sang hidden amid thick leaves. The man scarce could tell if all the sweetness of that place were truth, or but woven magic. How this might be seemed nought to him, so he might pluck a living rose or two for Beauty. Yet he trod lightly, lest a spell should snap, and the dream melt away, leaving him alone in some drear bleak waste.

But as he held the plucked flowers in his hand, a dread of some nameless unknown thing began to chill the man's heart. Night seemed gathering round. The loud birds ceased their music; the merry-voiced fountains ran dully; and a shuddering dreadful sound, creeping up a-nigh him, turned all his blood to ice. The heavy dragging rustle as of some huge beast beneath the trees, became at length a grizzly shape, on the open green.

The man was 'ware of great blackness and the grating of teeth. What more he could never tell, for betwixt



the strange darkness and his mortal fear, standing there unarmed,—nought in his right hand but some stolen roses,—sight failed him. Then the Beast stayed still, and the

roses dropt from the man's grasp ; and that Beast spake in a voice which was terrible to hearken to, so shaken was it by despair and rage.

"Who, wretched man ! art thou, that darest enter here and steal my roses ? Meet were it did I slay thee there where thou standest !"

But now the merchant, in whose breast there beat no woman's heart, gat together all his strength and wit. So he turned and faced the Beast.

"That were poorly done, fair sir," said he, "to slay an unarmed man—one, too, less mighty than thyself. The child shall yet win sweeter flowers than these ; take back thy roses and let me be gone." And he cast down the flowers, and spurned them with his foot.

But the Beast's wrath on a sudden changed, as with a grievous voice he groaned, "For whom, then, art thou thus lost ?"

Then the man told him all ; of his bootless journey to the distant seaport,—of how his eldest daughters had

UPON THE STRANGE PRICKLY LEAVES, SOME
ONE HAD CURIOUSLY CARVED BEAUTY'S NAME

THE BEAST CAME NEAR, AND THE ROSES FELL
FROM HIS GRASP.



desired jewels and gold raiment, and of Beauty's wish for one white rose.

Silently the Beast heard; then, drawing a deep breath, like a human sigh, he spake again very softly. "Merchant," he said, "death is the price they pay who steal that without which life to me were one long death. But if life still to thee is sweet, thou must bring hither that young maid of whom thou spakest. Half a year will I await her coming; but if she come not then, in thine own house will I seek her, and little more joy will life hold then for thee or her. So get thee gone, and take this rose for Beauty." With that the Beast brake off a rose, and thrust it into the merchant's hand, who, for a moment stood still, and heard in the glimmering twilight that huge creature depart, crashing and sliding backward amid the trees. Then the man, dazed and bewildered, hasted back to the little door in the wall. Hard by stood the chestnut horse, tied to a tree, watchful and impatient. On the earth lay a white thin

covering of snow, and on the snow the morning sun shone fair. The horse and his rider made good speed along the echoing white road, till at the border of the wood the merchant slacked rein, and there, a little way down the hill before him, he saw the well-known homestead. The grey ridge and the ancient tower, the curving shore, and blue sea beyond. And now, slowly pacing down the steep way, he fell on meditation. Almost he thought within himself, last night's strange chance to be a fearsome dream. But the rose in his hand shot back a terror that no vision, but indeed a dismal fate, had overtaken him; and that now, joyless and unholpen must he abide. Wild thoughts beset him: thoughts of the deep broad water and safe haven on that other side; deadly thoughts to make an end of life and misery for him and for the child he loved. Yet, as day drew on, Care and Fear fled. Hope once more danced lightly in the man's soul, for neither age nor misfortune had yet quite dulled his cheer; and now, upon the level road, he joyously spurred on to meet

his children waiting at the door. You may well believe how with bitter and hard words Beauty's sisters bemoaned themselves to see their father's poor return. No long



train of sumpter mules and servants! Only Beauty, was glad. She laughed gently, and made him joy and sweet welcome as he kissed her, putting the dear-bought rose

into her hand. But soon must the bitter tale be told. So with set white face, and amid choking sobs, the father must confess how with that hateful vow he had sold his child's life. But she embraced him in her arms, and with loving smiles bade him take heart, and put fear from him; for that although half a year was but a little space to live, there yet was time for a few happy days, and for hope, within a while to light upon some escape from misery. As for the three brothers, they made light of the matter; but when they knew all the truth, swore great oaths that their sister should not go.

Days and weeks went quickly by in cloud and sunshine. Each night the little load of trouble, or it might be peace, that the day had gathered, slipped away into the Great Storehouse, and was forgotten. One wretched thought only remained in the darkness and silence to perplex the hapless merchant with a dull surprise and bewildered dread of what soon or late must come. As for Beauty, since her father hid within himself the secret

terror that after the busy day was done, laid wait and beset for him the dark hours, she wasted small care on aught, but how best to make cheer in their poor house. But oftentimes would a sharp pain strike athwart the father's heart, when at evening he wended home from



the fishing or the field. Then, perchance, after the cliff was climbed, he would look towards Beauty's casement in the tower—there, amid bud and blossom, a face would smile down upon him, fairer than any rose. For in some old earthen pot, that dear-bought briar had been

set, and it had taken root and grown into a goodly plant. And Beauty tended it well, and loved her blooming rose-tree, and never a doubt nor fear of any deadly Beast beclouded her strong heart.

But now, when summer-tide was full, on a blue June day, when his sons were all away in the fields, the man looked wanly in his young daughter's face; and she, well knowing what that was he would say to her, went and wrapt a grey mantle round her, and set forth with him to the outward gate. And there she bade farewell to her sisters, who followed, making some hollow show of false sorrow. Tenderly her father lifted up the maid and set her upon a lean rough-coated farm horse, which awaited them, tied to the gate. And then, leading the horse by the bridle-rein,—as in a dream,—they fared forth together on their fateful way. Soon the steep path that had wound through barren rocks, began to cross the sandy plain, and before the sun was high, they had passed on into a beautiful green world of young corn, all bedashed

with jewelled blooms of blue and scarlet and gold, between the thin-eared ranks. Loud sang under the white clouds, whole heavenward companies of the quivering, grey-winged bird. White cottage walls gleamed under deep thatch, each one in its little close of orchard or of fragrant walnut-trees. And upon the upland slopes lay many a fair homestead, half seen amid the crowding of rich corn-stacks. And so the narrowing way led on to the storm blown pines and thickets of dwarf oak, which crowned a dark line of hill above. Slowly they toiled up the height, for the noonday sun shone hotly down; and there under the shade the twain stayed a while, and undid the little store of food they had to eat by the way, and let their wearied beast go, in the scanty grass near by. When long shadows stretched over the land, they were afoot once more. And now the merchant followed, dumb with a despair that had no words, while Beauty on her horse went shining through the wood. Sorrowfully the winds made dole in the leafy boughs

above their heads. And ever as they went the trees grew more thick together, with black night down within the forest depths. Twisted roots crawled serpent-wise across the path, and needs must the travellers go carefully and slow. Night drew on, and the man began to mark the way with care, and sought through the darkness for the old stone wall, he thought to be not far from that place. Right so there came to them some glimmer of moon-litten stone between the trees, anigh the dimness of their path. And now the long garden wall echoed back the sound of the iron-shod hoofs. But smooth and without break seemed that length of ordered stones. And though the man sought painfully, feeling with his hands where the shadows fell thickest, yet it seemed he might never find the little door. Many an odorous wave of delicious fragrance came over from the other side. And in the uncertain light, Beauty perceived an overhanging of white roses amidst tangled weeds. And therewithal, as in a dream strange things do happen with

great ease and likelihood, so whilst yet they sought the entrance, on a sudden they were within the garden of the Beast. Light seemed to shine from the far end of a wide grassy way, and onward to that light, must they go. After a few paces the travellers came anear the lighted windows and open gates of a large fair manor. Gently her father lifted down Beauty from the horse, and leaving him to go whither he would, they entered, dazzled with a great silvery blaze of light. These twain were utterly alone. No sound, no living creature greeted them there.

So in shivering silence, treading lightly in that marble-pillared place, where the lightest footstep echoed and rang again, they came to a marvellous painted hall. Beauty gazed with wonder on the red rose-leaves that strewed the floor, on the golden hangings and the festal garlands on the walls, and the banquet spread with care awaiting them. And because their bodies were faint from weariness and hunger, they sat them down on the gold-wrought chairs to make what cheer they might,

notwithstanding that their very souls were chilled with dread of the yet unseen presence. So they ate and drank; and afterwards, as they still sat there, there seemed to grow upon the air, drawing from distant corners of the house, and along the corridors, a dreadful sound, which made them tremble with affright; and the man knew that the Beast came nigh. So they began to bid each other farewell. Vainly did the maiden strive to hide her trouble when that perilous shape came anear. And first the creature gazed at Beauty, as she shrank back, clinging to her father, to whom he spake with a man's voice, but in slow and halting speech: "Good friend, ye be welcome, for well and truly ye have holden your promise." And then to her—"Beauty, come you here of your will?"

And she answered quickly, "Yea, in good sooth."

The Beast seemed well pleased at that. Nevertheless, in gruesome tones, he required of the merchant to be gone on the morrow, and that he might never behold

THE ROOM WHERE BEAUTY SLEPT.

AT DAWN, A LADY CAME TO COMFORT HER.



him any more. Then, with a strange, wistful look at the girl, of mingled ruth and kindness, from under the shaggy beast-like brows, he turned from the lighted chamber, and gat him away to the darkness of his unknown den.

So that night, long after moonset, Beauty and her father still sat together, hand laid to hand, speaking of past things, and loth to part—these two, for whom all the joy of life seemed done—while the lights burned low and the summer night waned fast. Overmuch sorrow had made their eyes heavy, and they longed for some short rest before the coming of the day that was to bring such bitter parting. Two fair sleeping rooms they found prepared. And at dawn, in the grey light, a pale woman, clad in long white raiment, stood beside Beauty's bed. She called very softly to the girl, bidding her have no fear of aught in that place, but to keep her heart strong and true. Beauty was fain to tell this dream to her father, that their parting might not be all too dark and hopeless.

When the sun was risen, the merchant looked out, and saw his horse waiting, saddled, by the door. So with white set face he made him ready; and as though constrained by some dreadful fate, he slowly departed, nor once looked back to the gate, where Beauty stood



in the dewy morning light. There was no red in her cheek, and her grey eyes were bright with unshed tears, as from the threshold she watched him go. And so to her the world became desolate; and yesterday seemed far away; and full far away and strange, already seemed to her the familiar faces and sounds of home, as ever,

fainter and fainter came back the ring of horse-hoofs along the road, and died at last in the distance.

Therewithal Beauty went back into the silent house. She made no sorrow out of measure, for she was great of heart; and the young are strong, and slow to cast hope away. And within her soul also lay a little hidden hope, most like to prophecy, that even in this place—where some grizzly death might steal out and seize her unawares from the dim corners of her prison—she might light soon upon the golden treasure key, whereby a door should open on the secret way leading back to old happier days, or perchance to some undreamed-of, goodlier world, and her heart should win its scarce-known, unpronounced desire.

Day followed day, and the girl forgot to call the Beast's house her prison. No troublous season of fear and doubt had she, but only long summer days of peaceful sweetness, and nights of dreamless sleep. Daily when the sun went down, and Beauty sat in the golden

hall at supper, the Beast came and sat there with her ; and his dreadful noise had grown less fearsome in her ears, and even was as it were, an unheard terror. She ate and drank, conversing kindly, and heeding little the ugliness of the presence that sat anear. Each night



after supper, that ill-favoured Beast did ask the lady, "Would she have him to her husband?" And every time she made answer, "No—that might she never do." And therewith the Beast would hang down his head, and sigh so dolorously that it were marvel to hear. And

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AFTER SUPPER, EVERY NIGHT, THE BEAST
ASKED BEAUTY TO BE HIS WIFE : EVERY NIGHT
SHE SAID HIM NAY.



EPHRAIM, DESS.

then Beauty grieved very sorely for him, and full fain was she to pray him to come back, whereas he shuffled from out of the sight of her. But yet her lips could never shape fair words which her true heart forbade.

Days went by, until the added sum of them at last made three long years: and still Beauty's life passed on dreamfully, in the palace of the Beast. But for the sweet-voiced thrushes and nightingales, which made melody in the rose-garden without, all day long and after sun-down,—the silence of that solitude might have made the girl's heart sad. Within the dusky pine-branches, wild doves had their nests, and to her ear their note had human tones. Often as she listened would their never-ending love-plaint seem to bring anigh old home-scenes in that other world, she used, she thought, to know full well.

After the three twelvemonths—which in that spell-bound place seemed but one summer long—there came a day when the lonely maid wandered further in the

garden than had been her wont. The gold hem of her gown slid shining over the daisies and pink petals drifted down from thorny brakes upon the grass, as she passed along green paths, to where the flowers and the broad sunshine ceased. Under the beeches, in the sun-flecked shade, her feet pressed last year's crisp brown leaves; hard by, under a knot of firs, a little thread of clear water, fell sparkling into a marble basin. And Beauty leaned over the sculptured edge, while many thoughts both sweet and bitter, went to and fro across her brain. Down in the clear pool wavered gleams of some other blue—shadows of other, not familiar, branching trees; till, as she gazed into that little shallow, she deemed some picture lay there. Through the leaves she dimly beheld, as in a very far distance, an old grey tower, on a sandy ridge, beside the rippling sea. Coldly shone the distant sunlight on the tower. The heavy iron-studded door stood wide open; and there in the weed-grown court browsed the white goats, or climbed the ruined wall, to reach down wandering

tendrils of wild vine rooted in the stones. Very solitary did that old grey tower seem, as, dimmed with gathering tears, her eyes sought, but all in vain, one whom she might nowhere find; then, as she gazed steadfastly, a dead leaf fell and blurred the image, erewhile distinct and living.

Beauty was passing heavy when she rose and left the beechen grove. And when, as she moved again along the fresh grassy pleasance, grey clouds had dulled the sunshine, and a new fear oppressed her joyous spirit.

That evening-tide, at supper, the Beast might well discover how the lady strove, but could not, to hide some sharp grief. Yet so daffish was he withal, that no manner of cheer could he make her, nor yet require her to say what had gone amiss; but only might he sit before her in troubled thought and look askance with down-hung head.

Then at last spake Beauty, in naught misdoubting the Beast (for he had ever shown himself kind and courteous to her, like a knight of old time)—

"Sir, I fain would go to see my father for a space. In the little fountain under the fir-tree, I saw an image of the tower; but my father, nor none else, I could nowhere see, and therefore I greatly fear for him."

Thereupon the Beast made great dole; yet he could in no wise refuse so sweet a one anything she would ask, were it much or little.

"Full woe am I of your departing," he said, "for I fear me sore that you will not come again."

But Beauty answered again, "I promise you of my faith; for and I be not sick, that in seven days' time will I return."

Then was the Beast comforted; and he gave her a golden ring of quaint device, whereon was graven an unknown word in antique letters. And this ring she was to lay under her pillow, on the night before the day set for her return. Then was Beauty cut to the heart when she heard the Beast groan, as he turned and went his way.

On the morrow that place was empty of her sweet presence. For when the maiden awoke, all things were strange about her, and yet remembered well; for she lay in the low poor sleeping room of old days, in her father's tower by the sea. Beside the bed hung great store of silken gowns, very rich, and well beseen with gold and silver embroideries, and sewn with pearls and many stones of price. Ill might such royal weed beseem that poor dark place, which still she called her home; but since there was no other, she did on in haste, the meanest of all that rich apparelling. Then lightly ran down the tottering stair to greet the beloved father. The merchant, sitting idle and alone in the house-place, did certainly hear that which he thought to be a well-known step. Yet so smitten was he with grief and long solitude, that scarce he could find will to look up with dull eyes, when Beauty came anear, and stood in the low arched doorway. There, for a moment, she made sunlight in the dark with her lovely face and the sheen of her gold-wrought

gown. And when she was kneeling at his feet, scarce indeed might Beauty persuade her father but that she were some hollow shape, sent of enchantment to mock his wretchedness; no, scarcely, even when she held him close, embracing him with loving arms, and had kissed him a hundred times could he believe it was herself. And as at last he let yield to joyful welcome, and with hand clasping hand they sat together,—they each told other all that had befell since that bitter day they parted; she, her bootless fears, her days of unhopèd peace; and he, of the elder sisters' marriages, of the three brothers gone away with many of that land to fight for the Holy Sepulchre. And while they made great joy together, and the aged crone began to set the board, right so the trampling of horse-hoofs sounded upon the stones without. Beauty looked out, and beheld her sisters with their husbands, at the door. Unbidden guests were they that morn; and with their coming all the new gladness seemed to die away within the house;





ONE SISTER'S HUSBAND, LIKE NARCISSUS OF OLD,

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WORSHIPPED HIS OWN BEAUTY.

BUT THE OTHER WAS FULL OF LEARNING.

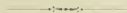


for the hearts of those sisters were evil, and in their hands they brought no blessing. Yet did Beauty strive to give them such kindly welcoming as she might. Some pity, indeed, must she give them; for no happy life was theirs. The elder had espoused a very proud and learned man, but poor; and by him she was greatly despised. And the younger had for husband a rich man, of very seemly person, who cared nought for other goodness than his own; and had scorn for his wife, withal she was so fair. So when they were lighted down from their horses, and had come into the house, and had begun to consider their young sister, how she was well beseen like a princess, in her shining gown, though serving them with such kindly grace, they were passing envious; and hatred, like a sharp thorn, pierced through their jealous hearts. Sore grieved were they when they knew that to her the Beast was in no wise perilous. But to her sisters Beauty made but short the tale of how she fared in that place. So within a while the two sisters

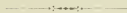
departed secretly into the green close behind the old tower, and came to a little hazel-brake anigh the wild; and there they sat them down and made complaint, bewalling them with tears and moans.

"Now are we in most evil plight," said they, "that our sister, younger than we, should go thus apparelled in silken stuffs, and live in a king's palace" (for so they called the house of the Beast). And then they took secret council one with the other; for they said, "so we may but prevail to keep her here yet another seven nights over and above the time she appointed with the Beast, he will surely be avenged of her falsehood; and then shall no gold save her life!"

And none heard save only the raven who abode in the trees. So these two women came softly back into the house; and they showed unwonted love for their sister, making much of her, and praying her to forget their mauger, and the wrong they had done her in the old days before time past.



ONLY THE RAVEN IN THE BRAKE,
SAW THE SISTERS WEEP FOR RAGE, AND HEARD THEM
PLOT HER DEATH.





And the maid, in her guilelessness, heard with joy their false words. And when the day was almost come that she should depart they made show of grief, and besought her to abide with them but one seven nights longer. Beauty looked to her father; but he covered his face, and dared say nought, for he was sore afeared of the Beast's wrath.

And so for that while Beauty forgot her promise, and let herself be forsworn, and yielded her will to those two women, nought witting of their most felon device. Thus it came to pass that she was well-nigh lost for the bitter malice of them that wished her death.

Yet in all these days the maid was not glad; but greatly troubled when she thought on the Beast. Very pitiful waxed Beauty's heart, as she remembered of all her friend's goodness, and his sorrow of her departing. And so it happened, that on the tenth night after, she dreamed a dream. She beheld the Beast as he lay

a-dying under a great tree in the garden. And the garden was a very great way off, and she so far away, she might not help him in his sore need; nor call to him, nor with tender words hold him back from death. With that great horror she awoke in the darkness, and weeping, gave herself the blame.

"Alas!" she said, "my broken faith; alas! that ever I should have thus forsook my friend; and if he die, now must I grieve to my life's end." Then she hastily laid her magic ring under the pillow, which was all wetted with her weeping. And soon for heaviness she fell on sleep. In the springing of the day Beauty opened her eyes, and, behold, she lay in the green-hung chamber wherein she had so greatly longed to be.

The golden autumn day rose fair and still on the silent manor and the garden of the Beast. All the long hours until evensong, must the maiden wait; then he would show himself, and she would comfort him, and

tell him of sweet coming days, wherein she never more would leave him.

The golden hours sped slowly. Slowly and softly fell the rose-leaves upon the grass. The song-birds that day hid in hushed silence, anear the garden bowers where Beauty sat alone, weaving flowers and fruits and birds unknown to earth, upon the silken loom. And evermore the longed-for evening hour drew on. Anon she heard the clock smite, and she gat her with haste into the house.

In the hall the table was covered, and Beauty, arrayed in a brodered gown of red samite, sat in her place and waited. No fresh garlands behanged the walls, but only brown and withered leaves. And she wist not anything of the Beast; and she had no mind to eat and drink, for a cold dread overcame her that some misadventure had befallen him, whiles she listened for the least sound whereby she might know that he approached. But when he came not within a while, she must needs go seek

him throughout the manor. But the chambers were empty, and the garden void, and whenas she called none answer came. Then she bethought her of the little fountain in the wood, and she ran thither. There, indeed, under a pine-tree upon the grass, lay that hapless Beast in a deadly swoon. And Beauty sank down upon her knees beside him, and raised his head in her arms; and it dread her sore but that he were in great peril of death. And then she grieved, and gave herself reproach and upbraiding. And, "Oh, dear Beast! what aileth thee?" she cried. "Alas! that ever he saw me to have such sorrow."

But when she had fetched a little water, and had put it in his mouth, the Beast came to himself. So he opened his eyes and looked upon the girl full sadly. And therewithal he said, in a full weak voice, "Alas! fair maid; why hast thou so long delayed? for now I fear me I shall die: for I feel well, the deep draughts of death draw to my heart."

Then did she make great moan, and besought the Beast of his love for her not to die and forsake her. But he seemed as though he heard not; and ever his breath came slower, and more faint. And then Beauty



fell to weeping as though her heart would break; and remembering her of all his gentleness and kindness, and that now he was like to die through her unkindness, in her anguish she called the Beast her love, her only love.

With that word there befell a strange adventure. But one moment ago, the maid had holden in her arms the Beast's grim, hairy head; and in her grief she knew not how it slid away from her embrace. For when she looked, there was nought but crushed leaves and grass where the dying Beast had lain. Also a dream-like brightness seemed to mingle silverly about the dusk of evening, as though the moon had risen, or that starlight trembled upon the gloom. Then all bewildered and amazed, she deemed that some young prince, clad in rich clothes, with jewelled mantle and scarlet plume, stood anear. So, forgetting fear in her trouble, she prayed him without more ado to tell her, "Had he seen the Beast? For," she said, "mine own dear Beast lay here but now, and like to die, and he is gone, and I know not where he is become."

But the strange prince held his peace, and none answer gave he to her most piteous cry; only he kneeled down beside the maid, and then full gently did he kiss

AH DEAR BEAST, SHE SAID ALAS

THAT MY UNKINDNESS SHOULD THUS SLAY THEE.



her golden hair, that spread all wide adown her neck, and then he kissed her red lips; and whenas, wondering and angered, she drew from him, and would have started away, he took her in his arms and said, "Oh lovely one, do you not then know me? Look at me, and see; for indeed I am that Beast, and he was me!"

But Beauty trembled, nor durst she look; for well she knew there had been some enchantment; and, sithence, it was a man and no Beast that spake, yet in his voice, and in the words he said, she seemed to hearken to the friend that she had lost erewhile. Then quick tears, but not of sorrow, filled her eyes, for an unwonted thing had happened; yet was it to her but as the fulfilment of some dear dream in old, forgotten, long-past days.

And so, alone together there, amid the brown dusk of coming night, for a little space, were they silent for very joy. And then did Beauty, in all maiden trust, give him, that had been the Beast, her true word, and promised that she would be his wedded wife. Then he

lifted her to her feet, and led her home along those same sweet grassy paths. And as they went, he told her



all the tale of the cruel spell which had bound him since these many woful years, in that unhappy shape, and how

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST.

nought but a dear maiden's love might set him free, and of how great had been his hopeless love for her.

Silently the white moths floated by. The gentle winds of summer sighed odorously, and stirred the broad hazel-leaves on either hand the close green alley, as they went; while loose-petalled roses bloomed and fell in aisles of overarching sweetness.

Therewith a great clearness shone around them; and as they came nigh the house, burning lights shone from the windows; and there was music, and the noise of merry voices mingling in songs and laughter. Strange sounds, long unheard in that still house! Then from the door the Beast's mother, a sweet and noble lady, came forth to meet them; and great joy made she, as she beheld her son, coming in his own likeness, as he was or that strange magic was laid on him. And then she embraced Beauty, and with her heart she made her right welcome.

Now the lady was a queen. She was the same that
came afore to Beauty in a dream to comfort her.

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Here then endeth the tale; sith it were over-long to
tell of the revels and the dances, and of how the golden
Hall was engarlanded with roses, and of the great feast
held there, on the day that Beauty and the Beast were



LOVE IS THE MAGIC THAT MAKES
ALL THINGS FAIR.

wedded together; nor need we tell, of how the merchant-master was called from his lonely tower, and came thither on his fair child's marriage morn; whenas his sorrowful days had end for evermore; and of how his three brave sons became most noble knights, and greatly renowned for the destroying of many pagan knights and giants, and of divers fell beasts and griffins of that time.

But Beauty's sisters, came never near that happy house. For wit you well, the winter rasure of such-like cankers, may not approach the green summer, wherein the flower of true love flourisheth.

THE END.



